

**GOVERNOR
TOUCHED
BY THE SAD
PLIGHT
OF MANY
CONVICTS**

“If I Live Out My
Term I

Will Free Stripling
and

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Have

Been Sufficiently
Punish-

ed,” He Says.

***WILL ASK
COMMISSION***

TO MAKE INVESTIGATION

“Everything Else
Fades

Into Background
Compar-

ed With My
Experience in

Tubercular Wards,”
States

Governor Harris.

The people of Georgia Saturday got an intimate view of their Chief Executive, Governor Nat E. Harris, as a result of his expressed opinions at the State Prison Farm and Reformatory, where, after a personal investigation, he declared that he would make it one of the big features of his program while Governor to alleviate the suffering, to right wrongs and restore to families and friends their loved ones now serving time at the State Prison Farm.

Moved by the scenes at the Prison Farm, Governor Harris announced last night on his return to Atlanta that he would send a Special Message to the General Assembly, probably next Friday, when he will recommend Radical Reforms, and will probably ask for an Appropriation of at least \$50,000 for needed improvements.

The Governor was particularly impressed with the Fact that many of the Prisoners are old men, feeble and emaciated, unfit for work, incapable of further Crime, yet held behind the Bars by the strong arm of the law.

WORSE THAN BEING DEAD.

“Poor fellows! Some of them have been at the farm twenty-five or thirty-five years; their former friends and Associates have forgotten them. It is worse than being dead,” said the Governor. “I asked some of them why they wanted their liberty, when they could remain at the Farm and be supported by the State.”

“That word ‘liberty’ has a stronger meaning to one of those men than it does to outsiders, and in reply to my query, they would say, ‘Oh, Governor, we would want to be free again. We promise not to be a charge on the State if released. We will make it through the remaining years in some manner.’”

The Governor stated that he would ask the Prison Commission to make a careful investigation to determine how many Infirm Prisoners there are, how long they have served and whether or not they can be released. He said he would release all such Prisoners Recommended by the Commission.

No Feature of the Farm, so touched the Heart of the Governor, as the Tuberculosis Wards where forty-eight Prisoners are confined.

“My Heart bled for those poor creatures, doomed beyond the aid of man,” said the Governor. “Their piteous Appeals for freedom still ring in my ears. There were men and women, too, life-timers, stricken by the dread disease, who were mere skeletons asking for liberty.” Tears rolled down the cheeks of the Governor as he told of his visit to this Ward.

KEPT CLEAN.

“The Tubercular Wards were spotlessly clean and well appointed; in fact, they were in such good condition that I remarked that it appeared they had been put in Order because the Governor was paying a visit. I learned later that they were always in good Order.”

“I asked some of the poor Creatures why they wanted to leave when they are getting the best attention possible. With

tears in their eyes, they all said they wanted to go home to die. The fear of dying in the Penitentiary, it appeared, was almost as painful as the disease.”

“While inspecting these Wards, a young man, a handsome, intelligent appearing fellow, came to me and placing a letter in my hands said, ‘Governor, I won’t have time to talk with you, but I want you to read this when you go home and see if you can’t help me get back to my loved ones out West.’”

One of the Governor’s first acts on returning home was to read the Appeal of that young man, who said he had come to Georgia from the West, had gotten in wrong and was sent up for five years. After serving only a short period, he contracted Tuberculosis and the Doctors said he could not live long, and would probably not serve out his time.

ALLEVIATE SUFFERING.

“Can I turn down those poor unfortunate people?” said the Governor. “No, I shall lend my efforts to saving many of them, and so long as I am within the law and not defeating the ends of Justice, I shall seek to alleviate their suffering and restore them to their families.”

“I asked one poor fellow why he was in the Prison and he replied: ‘For murder.’ I looked into his emaciated face and at his skeleton form and my thought was, how terrible is the punishment that has been placed upon him—incarcerated for life by the laws of man, and then doomed by the laws of nature.”

“The day’s investigation has been one of interest from start to finish; I have learned much that I expect to use for the good of

Georgia; my Secretaries secured data at my Dictation upon every matter that came under my Observation, but the Frank Case, the Stripling incident, and everything else fades into the background compared with my experience in the Tubercular Wards.”

“No matter how long I may live,

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nor what may occur in the future, I shall go to my grave hearing the wails of those unfortunates.”

The Governor, discussing the Appeal of the little daughter of Edgar Stripling, the life term, who climbed on his knee and secured his promise of a Pardon for her father, said it was one of the most pathetic incidents of the day.

WILL FREE

MANY OTHERS.

“When that pretty little child climbed up on my knee and begged me to give her papa back to her, I could not resist. I told her to run immediately to her father and tell him I would send him back to his family. I cannot do so at once, but if I live out my term as Governor, I will free that man and many others, who have already had sufficient Punishment meted out to them,” said the Governor.”

“As the man Stripling, his little daughter, and an older daughter gathered about and wept for joy, I had to turn my face

to keep the members of my party from seeing my own tears, but I found that every man in the crowd likewise had tears in his eyes.”

Speaking of the Prison Farm Land, the Governor said:

“It is the poorest land, I have ever seen. I don’t see how they raise anything at all on it. It is well suited for giving the convicts something to dig into the work on during their terms. There are gullies that keep appearing constantly and it keeps them busy filling them and terracing the land.”

“None of the State Institutions have been discussed more generally by the people of the State in letters to me and in conversation than the State Prison Farm. Hundreds of people are complaining because the farm produced a few hundred Bales of Cotton last year. They claim it affected the Price of Cotton, and was at the same time in competition, with free labor.”

The Governor had little to say of the investigation of the attempt on the life of Frank. He was at Frank’s bedside when Physicians dressed the laceration in his neck.

“It was an ugly wound, and I don’t see how the man can get well,” said the Governor. “The Doctors, however, think differently. Frank was coughing considerably, which appeared to be a strain on him.”

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***In Message to
Legislature***

Governor Will Recommend

State Farm Improvements

Closeted With the
Governor

and the Adjutant
General,

Creen Tells Why He
Tried

To Kill Frank.

BY NED M'INTOSH

(Special Staff Correspondent.)

Milledgeville, Ga., July 24.—(Special.) Based upon his personal investigation of the attempt made by William Creen upon the life of Leo M. Frank and the fight Wednesday between two Prisoners, Frank Reid and Charlie Millen, and his inspection of the condition of the entire State Prison farm and reformatory properties, Governor Nat Harris, upon his return to Atlanta, will draft a special message to the General Assembly recommending measures that he believes should be taken to remedy conditions at the farm.

Just what the Governor's comments or recommendations before the General Assembly will be, he would not today disclose.

To Urge Improvements.

"That is one of the things about which I do not desire to talk," said Governor Harris in answer to inquiries. "I prefer to weigh the matter and let my first comment be to the General Assembly itself."

The views of the Governor and the Prison Commission upon things seen today, however, were so thoroughly in accord that it is likely that in his message, he will recommend all the improvements for which the Appropriations Committee has urged a Special Appropriation of \$30,000, as well as other details which the Commission has from time to time asked.

Among other things that Governor Harris will recommend in his message to the General Assembly will be that convict labor be used as far as possible for the construction of any new Buildings that may be built by Appropriations made by this Assembly. He will also urge that the Appropriation be increased.

Governor Harris' many talks with old and disabled Prisoners led to the General Belief that when he returns to his Office, he will more frequently grant Clemency in such Cases. There are many such Prisoners who are hardly more than Wards of the State's Charity.

The Governor explained that his visit to the Farm was as much to inspect conditions as to investigate the Frank incident.

Commission to Meet.

The Prison Commission will hold a meeting soon after they get back to Atlanta and go over the general situation as seen by them today. Chairman R. E. Davison, of the Commission, stated that this meeting might probably draft a Report touching upon the Frank Affair, the fight between Reid and Millen and general conditions. It is not improbable that this Report will be submitted to the Governor for his consultation in drafting his message to the Assembly.

No Blame for Staff.

Members of the Prison Commission declared that they have no reasons to believe that any of the Official Staff at the Prison is responsible through any neglect of Duty for the fact that Creen secured the knife or for any other circumstances surrounding the Affair.

"It is simply one of those unfortunate things that just sometimes happen," said one member of the Commission.

Governor Harris, in turn, said that he did not believe the Prison Commission is responsible in any way for recent events at the Prison or for the conditions existing there.

After completing their inspection of the State's property here this afternoon, Governor Harris and his party visited Milledgeville, and were escorted about town by Congressmen Carl Vinson, of the tenth District; Mayor Miller S. Bell, President M. M. Parks, of the Georgia Normal and Industrial Institute, and Dr. E. A. Tignor, Secretary of the Board of Trustees. They then left for Macon by automobile, whence they will return to Atlanta by train.

Looked in a Room at the State Prison Farm, Governor Harris and Adjutant General J. Van Holt Nash heard William Creen tell why he tried to kill Leo M. Frank Saturday night a week ago. Creen stated that in attacking Frank he was attempting to rid the Prison of a man whose presence he believed would result in a mob attack on the Prison and the consequent loss of innocent lives.

He had formed this opinion, he said, by reading Newspapers and had alone planned his attack simply because he felt it was his duty.

Governor Harris stated, following his talk with Creen, that he did not hold Warden James E. Smith or other Officials responsible.

"I don't like it," he said, in referring to conditions.

Creen told his story in the presence only of Governor Harris and Adjutant General J. Van Holt Nash, the Governor asking, in accordance with the Prisoner's wishes, that he be granted a Private Audience.

Creen, unmanacled for the first time since his attack on Frank, was closeted with the Governor in the Room adjoining that

in which Frank lies wounded. All doors leading from the Room were bolted.

Creen began by reciting to the Governor the History of his own Case up to the time of the Fact that he had killed two men and was serving a Life Sentence.

Creen Tells Story.

“Why did you do this?” asked the Governor, referring to the attack on Frank.

Creen’s story, as repeated by the Governor and General Nash, substantially was:

“I had heard talk of the danger of Frank being kept here.”

“I felt that as long as he was here, there was danger of the Prison being attacked. I was afraid the Guards and the people making the attack would shoot at each other and people be killed, so I came to the conclusion that it was my duty to save the people from the danger to which Frank’s presence exposed them. I determined that Frank was subjecting us to danger, so decided that I would kill him.”

“When did you conceive this idea?” asked Governor Harris.

“A few days before it happened,” replied Creen. “I studied over it and decided to carry my plan out.”

“Now tell the Governor the truth, Creen,” said Governor Harris. “Was there any suggestion made to you from the outside?”

Creen on Knees.

Creen fell to his knees and raised his hand.

"I swear that I never talked of the Frank Case to anyone inside or out of the Prison before or after the attack."

"Did you mean to kill him?" Creen was asked.

"I did," he replied calmly. "I felt it was my duty."

Asked where he obtained his knife, Creen replied that he had slipped it from the kitchen on the Friday night before he attacked Frank and had hidden it in his cot.

After Creen's talk with the Governor the newspaper Correspondents were called in to hear Creen's Statement in reference to charges that he had been beaten by Prison Authorities.

In the presence of the Correspondents Governor Harris asked him whether he had ever been whipped here.

"No," was the answer.

No Fault to Find.

Creen bared his back which was said to have been scarred from the floggings. There was no evidence of his ever having been beaten.

"Have you ever been mistreated here in anyway?" Creen was asked.

There was no answer, but the Prison Commissioners and the Governor Stated that Creen a few minutes before had told them he had no fault to find.

Convicts at State Farm

Ask Pardon For McNaughton

Milledgeville, Ga., July 24.—(Special.) Over one hundred and thirty-five Convicts at the State Farm have signed a Petition asking Governor Nat Harris to Pardon Dr. J. W. McNaughton, whose prompt attention probably saved the Life of Leo Frank last Saturday night, following the attack on Frank by J. William Creen.

The Petition reads:

“For nearly two years Dr. McNaughton has ministered to our sufferings. He has answered our calls at any time, day or night, and always cheerfully and willingly. We have learned to love him and feel grateful to him for the Reason that he has devoted his Life and efforts for nearly two years to relieving suffering.

“He has our utmost confidence, and we fully believe in him. We have tried him in the Crucible of Prison Life, and he has not been found wanting.”

“We beg of you that you harken to our Petition and Prayer that you grant mercy and liberty to this Christian man who has done so much to render our lives more endurable while in Prison and who has unfailingly answered our every demand with a smile.”

“We beg of you that your Excellency will grant a full and speedy pardon to Dr. McNaughton, who we believe fully merits it.”

Dr. McNaughton, when told of the Petition, declared it was purely voluntary on the part of his fellow Prisoners and expressed deep appreciation to them. McNaughton is serving a Life Term, having been convicted in Emanuel County of the murder of Fred Flanders. There always has been considerable doubt expressed in his Case, and for this Reason his original Sentence—Death—was commuted by Governor John M. Slaton to Life Imprisonment.
